



The President's Daily Brief

24 January 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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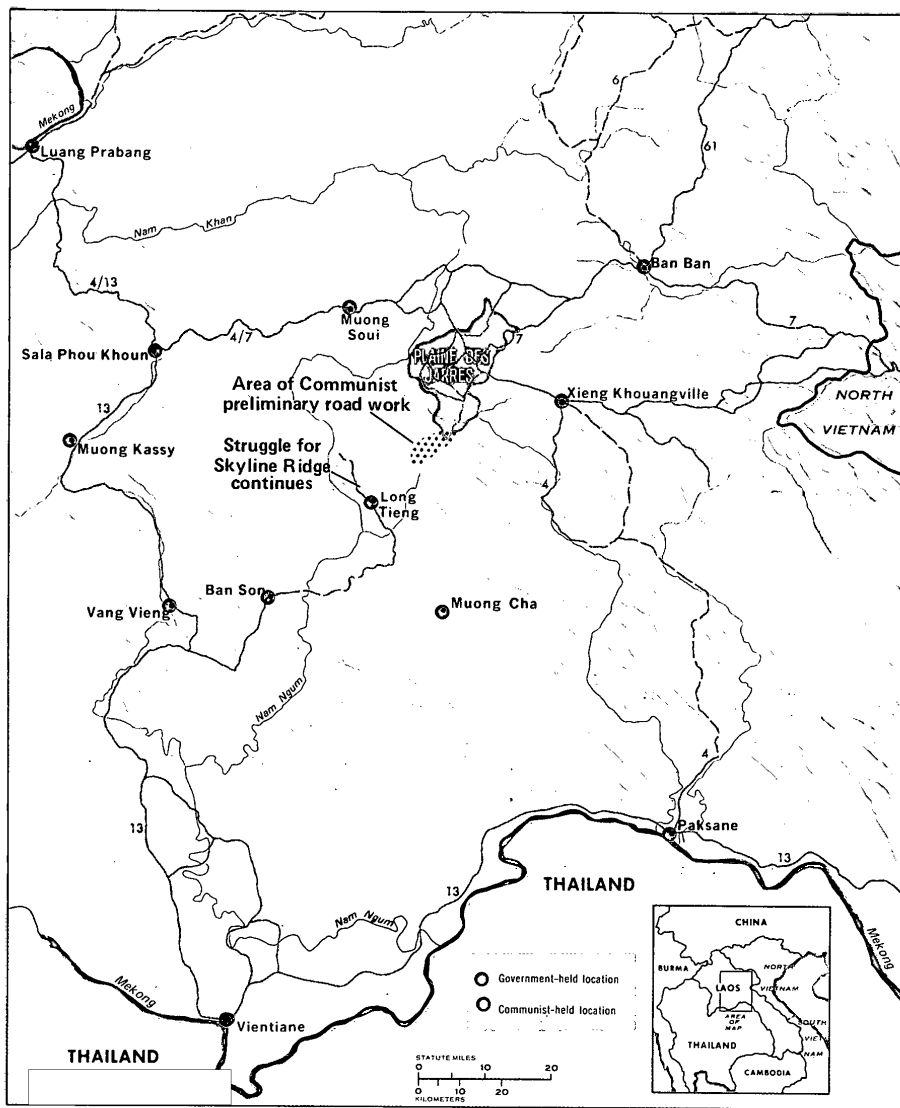
PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Laos, the level of activity around Long Tieng remains low, but to the west government forces are trying to regroup after the loss of a crossroads town. (Page 1)

Relations between Saigon and Phnom Penh have taken one of their periodic turns for the worse. (Page 2)

The North Atlantic Council has reacted negatively to Maltese Prime Minister Minto's request for a separate \$26-million payment to head off a financial crisis. (Page 3)

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LAOS

No major new Communist attacks along Skyline Ridge were reported over the weekend, and no positions changed hands. The North Vietnamese are still holding the easternmost portion of the ridge, and enemy troops are still dug in along the ridge's northern slope where they direct recoilless rifle and mortar fire at the irregulars' position perched on the ridge itself.

Elsewhere in the Long Tieng area, government patrols have found fresh evidence of large North Vietnamese units southeast of Long Tieng, but no major action has yet developed. The arrival in the next few days of irregular battalions after a period of rest and refitting will strengthen the government's position in the area. For their part, the Communists have started work on a road from the Plaine des Jarres that, if it is completed, should considerably ease their logistic problems near Long Tieng.

To the west, government troops are trying to regroup south of Sala Phou Koun, following the loss of that crossroads town on 21 January. Reinforcements are also being sent into Muong Kassy, a town on Route 13 about 25 miles south of the Route 7 junction. Government spokesmen in Vientiane are claiming that North Vietnamese troops were responsible for driving the 1,300-man government force from Sala Phou Koun, but intercepted messages reveal that the victory was achieved by at least three Pathet Lao and "patriotic neutralist" battalions, units with less military prowess than the North Vietnamese.

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CAMBODIA - SOUTH VIETNAM

Relations between Saigon and Phnom Penh have taken one of their periodic turns for the worse.

--Earlier this month Saigon withdrew ARVN troops from the Krek area of Cambodia.

--Saigon has reduced river convoys to Phnom Penh from four to two per month.

--Phnom Penh is reluctant to allow Saigon to establish an office in western Cambodia to deal with South Vietnamese internees there.

The Khmer - South Vietnamese relationship will never be completely smooth, but both parties will work to preserve it as long as they face a common enemy. Relations may become more acrimonious in the next few weeks, however, if Communist military pressure increases Cambodian fears just when Saigon wants to keep its forces on hand in South Vietnam.

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NOTE

Malta: The North Atlantic Council on 22 January reacted negatively to Prime Minister Mintoff's request for a separate, one-time payment of \$26 million to prevent an immediate financial crisis in Malta. There was a general consensus among the council members that their offer of \$36 million annually, plus bilateral aid, in return for a new Malta-UK defense agreement, should stand. The allies, however, did appear disposed to go at least part way in meeting Mintoff's need for cash by making available a large portion of the first annual payment in the near future providing that a satisfactory settlement is concluded.

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The next step in the negotiations is scheduled to be a meeting between Mintoff and British Defense Minister Carrington tentatively set for 28 January in Rome.

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